

INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION
PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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SHARON HELGERSON OF ILWU LOCAL 8, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: SHARON HELGERSON

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ, RON MAGDEN, CONOR CASEY

SUBJECTS: CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS; CIO; PORTLAND, OREGON; INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS, LOCAL 1005; WOMEN LONGSHORE WORKERS; AUTOWORKERS; INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD; ST. JOHNS NEIGHBORHOOD, PORTLAND; 1948 ILWU STRIKE; MISOGYNY; SEXUAL HARASSMENT; INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION; PACIFIC MARITIME ASSOCIATION; KU KLUX KLAN; CARL HELGERSON; AL SARCELLI; HENRY LUNDY; JESSE STRANAHAN; CONRAD NEGSTAD

LOCATION: 2018 PCPA CONVENTION, PORTLAND, OREGON

DATE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2018

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 01:14:25

FILE NAME: HelgersonSharon_PCPA_2018_Video_acc6194-006.mp4

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[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** Today is the seventeenth of September, 2018, and we are here in Portland, Oregon. Ron Magden and Harvey Schwartz are doing interview and Conor Casey is helping, and we're with Sharon V. Helgerson from Local 8. Let me ask you, Sharon, just a few questions like where you were born, when you were born.

[00:00:40] **SHARON HELGERSON:** I was born in 1937, Portland, St. Johns, working man's end of town.

[00:00:44] **HARVEY:** Okay. You have something of a longshore family. Can you kind of describe your background?

[00:00:51] **SHARON:** I had a maternal grandfather who worked in Astoria at the grand docks for the ILA [International Longshoremen Association] . My father was a longshoreman and a commercial fisherman. My brother was a longshoreman. So, I grew up listening to longshore stories at the supper table every night, and my dad would discuss the day's work.

[00:01:20] **HARVEY:** What was your dad's name and your brother's name?

[00:01:22] **SHARON:** My dad's name was Carl Helgersen, Carl M., and my brother's was Carl T.

[00:01:27] **HARVEY:** What did they talk about at the dinner table?

[00:01:30] **SHARON:** Well, I remember different stories. My dad told different stories. I remember one story about a snake in the hold—burlap, I think they were discharging burlap at terminal four, and how the sailor, the first-mate or the sailor, threw the snake in the river, in the Willamette. And the speculation was, my God, maybe it was pregnant, and what kind of snake was it, was it a cobra, was it—And then, different stories, stories about, I think it was a German sailor, or it was a German ship, that was using the American flag for a rag. That was after the war, and a fight broke out on the deck. And there were stories—I remember another story that stuck was puppies and dogs on deck on a Pakistani ship, you know, ready for dinner. And somebody called the Humane Society, and they came and got the dogs, but then the discussion at the dinner table was these guys with rags wrapped on their feet for shoes in the cold and, you know, was it worth the puppies lives? [laughing] So, different stories like that I heard.

[00:02:53] **HARVEY:** Did they talk about unionism at all?

[00:02:55] **SHARON:** Oh, sure, my dad was a staunch union person. He'd been—he had worked at a lumber [?Pacific?] , what was it, manufacturing I think, in St. Johns, and had been locked out—they had been locked out. I don't know how long he was out, but it was—they wanted to join the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] , you know, the AFL [American Federation of Labor] . But anyway, it was a company union, they wouldn't let them, so they were locked out. And my dad talked about the suffering then, you know, they lost his car, he'd had his first new car. He lost the car, and plus took a debt out that I think he had to pay a hundred percent interest on, and then he ended up selling the car for fifty dollars to some farmer or something. So he was—yeah, he was a staunch union man.

[00:03:37] **HARVEY:** This lockout, was this—it must've been the 1930s? With the CIO?

[00:03:37] **SHARON:** It was. It was 1936, maybe. 1936, '37, I think. I was born in '37; maybe it was '37 because I was a baby, I think. And I know my dad talked about the meeting they had canned green beans—they got down to where all they had was canned green beans for the winter. He also talked about collecting wood at the river, going down to the [river] one time to collect wood for the home to burn and to cook by. He went in the morning, and he had an appointment that he went to wherever they got relief—he called it "relief," I suppose, like welfare. So he said the guy interviewed him, and my dad apologized to him. He was a neat, clean person, and he apologized for his appearance because he'd been down collecting wood. And the guy said, "How much wood do you think you got?" Anyway, he deducted it from his relief. The struggle, he talked about the struggle and the union. He believed in the union, of course. In the end, at that Portland manufacturing company, he ended up going back and worked with the scabs. He'd been an overhead crane driver, and he had to stop and

start from the bottom again, but he had no choice. Until, then he went on and worked for the shipyards, and he got a job at the shipyards.

[00:05:47] **HARVEY:** Okay, was he in the ILA [International Longshoremen Association] back in the [s] ?

[00:05:50] **SHARON:** No, that was my grandfather. That was my grandfather that was in the ILA in the '30s. My dad in the '30s wasn't—my dad didn't start longshoring, I think, until—it was in the '40s.

[00:06:03] **HARVEY:** In the [s] , okay. So, he's doing other things that you described in the 30's, he's not yet in the apparatus.

[00:06:10] **SHARON:** No, he wasn't involved in that. He was involved in the other strike at the manufacturing place.

[00:06:25] **HARVEY:** What about your childhood? Can you describe growing up? What was it like for you growing up in this area? Where you went to school, what you experienced?

[00:06:36] **SHARON:** You know, the area I grew up in, the men carried lunch boxes and the women wore house-dresses, and it was just a carefree time—roller-skated around the streets, played, went to the local schools.

[00:06:57] **HARVEY:** Where did you go to school?

[00:06:58] **SHARON:** I went to James John [Elementary] School and Roosevelt High School.

[00:07:03] **RON MAGDEN:** Movies?

[00:07:04] **SHARON:** Pardon?

[00:07:05] **RON:** Movies? Did you go to movies?

[00:07:07] **SHARON:** Oh yes, the movies every Saturday, you know, every Saturday afternoon—that was the movies, you know. Yeah, twenty-five cents to go to the movies. Twenty cents for the movie, five cents to spend. Yeah, I went to movies. And I remember the Salvation Army band playing up in front of the local dads at St. Johns on Saturday afternoon, you know, with the tambourines and the—There was a lot of bars and taverns; it was a working man's town.

[00:07:38] **RON:** Did you go up to the hall very often?

[00:07:42] **SHARON:** Oh, I never went to hall growing up. That was a men's place, that was [laughing] , no. My brother went to hall, and he'd come home and he'd tell me how the earnings clerk had a big wooden drawer full of Tootsie Pops, all different flavors, and you had to choose what color Tootsie Pop, what flavor you wanted. He'd come home and tell me about that. No, but the hall was a place where men took their sons, not their daughters. I mean, I never imagined that I would've been a part of that, ever. Never.

[00:08:19] **HARVEY:** [to Ronald] Go ahead.

[00:08:20] **RON:** What kind of cargo did your dad work?

[00:08:23] **SHARON:** Oh, he worked it all. He talked about the hides, when he started, he talked about the hides and the barbed wire, and the—you know, it was break bulk. Break bulk. And then he became a winch

driver, and then he was a winch driver. And then they got the first cranes, and he became a crane driver. He was a big guy, and he worked in the hold. I think he was a good longshoreman, good union man. He didn't pilfer, which, you know, some did. [laughing] I remember he—the customs, one time he was so angry, because my dad was curious about different things; they were offloading some—I think they had walnuts from somewhere, and my dad said he'd never seen walnuts like that, he said just huge walnuts [gestures a few inches with hand] . So he put three or four of them in his pocket to bring home and show my mother, and I don't know what else they were discharging that day, but whatever [they were discharging] , the customs was on the gangway, at the top of the gangway, and my dad got a fine for those walnuts. And he was so angry about that because he didn't pilfer. [laughing] He didn't. And I remember when they'd get the Luckenbach ships in sometimes at Easter, and he'd bring home a little candy or something, and we used to—we'd be so happy, because Luckenbach, I guess, had the candy. Luckenbach does.

[00:09:58] **RON:** Do you remember the strike? Was he in that?

[00:10:04] **SHARON:** No, I think that must've been—no, no, no. No, I don't. He might've—I don't know. He—although, he was longshoring during the war because I know he was—during part of the war, I know—because he was also commercial fishing, and I think that was why he wasn't in—because fishermen were exempt or something from the—he was older too.

[00:10:36] **RON:** One hundred and twenty seven day strike, and as many as could went fishing.

[00:10:44] **SHARON:** Went fishing?

[00:10:45] **RON:** Yeah.

[00:10:46] **SHARON:** Huh. I don't remember, I don't remember when he bought his little boat either, he had a little commercial boat.

[00:10:54] **RON:** There was no special deal for those who went in the summer with fish [unintelligible] here.

[00:11:04] **SHARON:** Ah. [nodding]

[00:11:04] **HARVEY:** Sharon, you got married pretty early, didn't you?

[00:11:09] **SHARON:** I did. I got married right out of high school, had a couple odd jobs. I think I worked at White Stag for a few months or something, and nothing; Newberry's makeup counter for another couple weeks. But yeah, I married real young. My husband was a union man, worked at the Oregon still and ended up being a millwright at Oregon still. He afforded a good living, and I had a good life. I was campfire leader, [unintelligible] mother, I volunteered at the school, went on the school trips, was able to take my kids swimming in the lake in the summer. I had a wonderful life for about fifteen years. [laughing]

[00:12:01] **RON:** How many children?

[00:12:03] **SHARON:** I had two: two daughters, two daughters. And when I divorced at fifteen years, one was a teen, just become a teen, and one was a pre-teen.

[00:12:15] **HARVEY:** You got a job at Lindon Farms. What kind of job was that, and why did you get that job?

[00:12:22] **SHARON:** Well, I tell you, when I got divorced I said I never had a job. And it was so unexpected as well, it was very unexpected. I mean, we were living a family life, and we put the kids in the station wagon, and we went to the drive-in to see a movie, we saw Easy Rider with [Peter] Fonda. [revs motorcycle] And, you

know, the kids' dad had been working long hours as a millwright; he'd come home and the soles of his shoes would be burned off, and his clothes would be wet from working on the furnaces, and he'd been working a lot of overtime. Well that [Peter] Fonda presented a pretty picture, you know. [laughs, revs motorcycle] And so that was the beginning of the end, and he let his hair grow, and I can remember he said he was going some place and he went to Vortex, a rock and roll festival. Then he got a chopper—he started looking at choppers, and he brought some guy by the house named “Murder Mike,” a Gypsy Joker. And it wasn't long before he joined the Gypsy Jokers [motorcycle club] .

[00:13:31] **HARVEY:** He did?

[00:13:31] **SHARON:** After my divorce, after our divorce—out the door. Well, I had no work experience or anything. So I started thinking, what was I gonna do, now I got these two kids I gotta support. And I need some health insurance because who knows if he's gonna stay at the steel mills, which he didn't. So he lost his retirement just by, geez, just a couple years. So, I was looking around for jobs, and I didn't have anything to put down on my resume or my application, you know. “I learn fast, don't get sick—never ill, fast with my hands,” you know, that's all I had, I had nothing. Anyway, I was running around down in Swan Island one day, I think I went down there—I think I was thinking about working on one of those “roach coaches” because they went to different industrial places, and I thought, well at least then I could get a lead. So I met one of these girls down on this job, and I saw that I couldn't do that. [laughing] You have to be fast, and you have to be, you know, batter back and forth, and some sexual innuendos going on, so no. But as I was down there, I saw some chickens running around, and I asked about them, and they said they come from the chicken factory over there, Lindon Farms. So I applied over there, and I got a job, I got a job there.

[00:15:07] **RON:** What were you doing?

[00:15:08] **SHARON:** Oh God. [laughing] I was doing everything. The first day I went in, the first morning I went in we started real early because it was summertime, and the chickens start—they die and get suffocated. So I was hanging bigger and better chickens, and you work till the last one came in, the last chicken, and I think it was a nine hour day the first day. And these chickens come down this chute, and they've already been outside there, or in another room, so they come down, and they're featherless, their head's on. You hang them. [motions hanging] As they come down you grab them because they come down this big steel tub, and you grab them and hang them. And I tell you, my hands—I worked there a Thursday, I went to work on a Thursday, and I worked a Thursday, and I worked a Friday, and my arms—they were bigger and better chickens, I think thirty-six thousand chickens went through the first day, and I was supposed to hang half of them. Well my partner, bless her heart, she covered me. Because I couldn't, I wasn't that fast, I wasn't that good. Monday morning I went back—God, I tell you, my arms swollen, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't give that job up. I didn't know what to do, I couldn't give that job—I started grabbing those big chickens, and another one would come down that chute and hit my hand, my arms—oh my God, tears just rolled down my cheeks. [laughing] It hurt so bad, I didn't know what to do. Finally, they come, the floor lady come and got me at another job. So then what I did is I skinned chicken gizzards in a roller. Hands in cold water all winter. And then I ended up taking the—eviscerating—the guts all day. So that's how I ended up there. And I worked there just about a year, a little over a year. Summer was coming up, and I went to the doctor and showed him my fingers were starting to twist from arthritis, so he gave me an excuse for unemployment. So now I figured I got a job record, and I asked for recommendations—I always ask for recommendations—when I left there, so he wrote me out a nice recommendation. So then I had these recommendations, I had a job record, so I used that summer—I set my sights on Freightliner and United Parcel [Service] , and Freightliner called me first. I went there twice a week, and finally I asked this gal, I said, “You have any inside information on me? I've been coming here a long time,” and she said, “Well just a minute.” She made a phone call, and this big guy, Oli, came out, and he was to be my boss then for the next six years, I guess. I worked there, at Freightliner.

[00:18:12] **HARVEY:** How come you picked Freightliner? How come you selected to try for that company and the other one?

[00:18:17] **SHARON:** Well, for Freightliner and UPS I tried because they were both on Swan Island, and it was really close to my house. And they both paid men's wages, and they both had—I applied at UPS for a truck driver, not loading, for truck driver. And Freightliner they had a parts plant and a truck plant, and I applied at the parts plant not the truck plant, which would've meant I had to do line work. So that's why: because of the pay and the—So I spot-welded for the most part is what I did for the most part at Freightliner. I was a spot welder for six years. And I ended up—before I went on the waterfront though, I ended up—I was getting bored so I transferred into the welding department. Well right after I transferred and was gonna do the big guy welding—the “big boy” welding—right after I transferred then they had a big lay-off, so I was sent to the grinding room. So I soon learned who the good welders were because you're grinding down all that bead, and the dirty, screaming tools and noise and dust and dirt. So I had applied for longshoring then, so I was just waiting.

[00:19:38] **HARVEY:** Was there a union at Freightliner?

[00:19:40] **SHARON:** There was a union, [Local] 1005 machinist union.

[00:19:42] **HARVEY:** So you were in that union?

[00:19:43] **SHARON:** Yes, yes. And we had a good shopster there whose brother was a longshoreman. Al Scarcelli was the guy—was our shop leader there, business manager, I guess maybe it was. But he was a good union man because I remember when we went there right after I first started—he was the shopster because it was the business agent that came out with his rhinestone ring and his polyester suit and told us at this meeting at Benson High School about our contract, the contract had come up, he said, “You're not gonna get any better, you take this,” you know, blah blah. It's when we got our first—and Al Scarcelli got up there and said, you know, don't take it, we're gonna—don't take it, we'll go on strike, it's gonna be—we need this. And by God, we got a cost of living, and it really brought the wages up, you know, besides our contract wage, twenty-five or fifty cents a year, whatever it was, then we got cost of living that come up every quarter, it was twenty-five cents, another fifteen cents at the time.

[00:21:03] **HARVEY:** Were you active in the union?

[00:21:04] **SHARON:** No, not really. No, not really, other than union meetings, no.

[00:21:14] **HARVEY:** It seems to me, coming in the range of 1979, you have a daughter, twenty-three, if I recall right, at that point when you applied for the waterfront?

[00:21:26] **SHARON:** No, no, no, my daughter was a teenager.

[00:21:28] **HARVEY:** She was a teenager?

[00:21:30] **SHARON:** Yeah.

[00:21:30] **HARVEY:** Okay. And how did you—

[00:21:36] **SHARON:** She was born 56.

[00:21:36] **HARVEY:** So she was a teenager at that point. And how old was your other daughter?

[00:21:41] **SHARON:** She was five years younger. She was about—They must've been about ten and fifteen, I think. Ten, fifteen.

[00:21:48] **HARVEY:** Okay. Somehow I got that wrong. How does it come that you apply for the waterfront?

[00:21:57] **SHARON:** Well, I was waiting, I knew that they were gonna hire women someday. You know, I knew they were gonna hire women, you know what I mean? It was coming up, it was coming up, so I was just hanging down there. I knew if they hired women, I wanted to be one because I knew that was the perfect job. I mean, you couldn't beat that job. So, yeah, I was really excited when it came up. And [pausing] dubious as well.

[00:22:31] **HARVEY:** How come?

[00:22:31] **SHARON:** Well because I didn't know if I could do the work. And I couldn't do some of it, you know, some of it was heavy, some of it was still heavy. If it'd been ten years earlier, we wouldn't have been able to do the work. But I was able to—when we'd come down, there was a variety of work when I started on the waterfront, there was still the container freight stations, there was four grain elevators, it was going day and night, the trucks were lined up. And steel and logs, there was a Matson line here, there was just a lot of work until the river blew—until the Mt. Saint Helens [erupted] and then the river, and then the work never came back, all of it never came back the same way it was.

[00:23:24] **HARVEY:** Can you tell us a little bit about your application? In your memoir, you have some interesting stories about applying—how you had to apply, put an application in, the whole process you went through.

[00:23:42] **SHARON:** Yeah, it was. They put in the paper they were gonna hire—a lot of papers, it was in—of course, I knew word of mouth. But it was a lot of the women's papers and different papers, so they advertised they were gonna hire. And I think they were going, and the PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] guy had said they had sixty-five hundred applications. So I knew there were gonna be a lot of them, but I didn't—when I applied, I wrote a handwritten resume, you know, trying to promote myself, you know, and sent my recommendations in, and then it was a wait. We met with—so then you had to send this application in a duplicate, and then I think we waited, God, two, three months. And I got a letter for an interview. And so then it was three PMA and three longshore people that—down in terminal one, in a warehouse down there—interviewed us. I remember that day, I was real nervous. [smiling] You know, what am I gonna wear, and what am I gonna—I'm gonna look like one of the guys. Yeah, went through a lot. And they asked a lot of different questions: are you afraid of heights, are you afraid of this, how would you do this?

[00:25:19] **RON:** Did the rough language bother you?

[00:25:26] **SHARON:** On the waterfront? No, no, no, no. You know, I mean, you didn't hear a lot of it anyway. I think they curbed themselves when we started, you know, they curbed themselves. They were really pretty decent.

[00:25:42] **RON:** The bachelor era had gone and the family era was in effect when you went on the waterfront. The old bachelor era, the [s] and [s] had pretty well passed. They were family-oriented.

[00:25:59] **SHARON:** Yeah, exactly, there was a lot of—yeah.

[00:26:03] **RON:** Do you remember the Bloody Thursday celebrations?

[00:26:06] **SHARON:** Sure, sure.

[00:26:08] **RON:** When did you start going to those?

[00:26:10] **SHARON:** Well, not so much with my family. That was not so much with my family. I went to some. The first one I really remember was when I met—it was after I longshored—after I met, whenever I met Jimmy Herman. I remember the Christmas parties when I was a kid, too. That's the part I remember because all the longshore kids got a present. Meet downtown someplace I think, and all—yeah—call you up from the stage. We didn't have a lot, so times were—longshoremen didn't make a lot of money in those days. They made decent, but you know. We weren't affluent, my family.

[00:27:05] **RON:** Portland started the Bloody Thursday celebrations, the rest of the coast was ready to let it go.

[00:27:13] **SHARON:** In what year?

[00:27:14] **RON:** And Portland never. 35.

[00:27:17] **SHARON:** '35. Every year.

[00:27:18] **RON:** Real serious stuff. Throw the wreath in the water, big picnic connected with it.

[00:27:25] **SHARON:** I threw the wreath in that first year.

[00:27:29] **RON:** You did?

[00:27:32] **SHARON:** Yeah, yeah. I had a picture of it, I think, in my book. I think I had a picture of Jimmy Herman.

[00:27:44] **RON:** You met him?

[00:27:45] **SHARON:** Yeah. [smiling] Yeah, I got a picture with him. He was a nice guy, Jimmy Herman. Yeah.

[00:27:54] **HARVEY:** When you first—like the first day, I think it was. Henry [Lundy] was present in the local.

[00:28:02] **SHARON:** Henry Lundy.

[00:28:03] **HARVEY:** And what did he say to you? He said something to you and to the other women?

[00:28:08] **SHARON:** About women longshoremen?

[00:28:10] **HARVEY:** Yeah.

[00:28:10] **SHARON:** That there was—that we were women longshoremen not longshorewomen because the name came from the sailing ships when they would send the man out to cry for men along the shore.

[00:28:25] **HARVEY:** Did that strike you?

[00:28:31] **SHARON:** It struck me as just fine. [laughing] It didn't bother me! I mean, I believe in equal, but I also believe in sensible. [laughing]

[00:28:41] **HARVEY:** Interesting.

[00:28:42] **RON:** But there must've been men who were really hostile.

[00:28:45] **SHARON:** There were—I tell you, what did my dad tell me before I went down, before I went down there? And I didn’t tell him I even applied. I didn’t know what he was gonna say. I didn’t even tell him I applied until I got my letter for the interview, and I went home and told him. He was happy for me, and he said, “Sharon,” he said, “There are all working stiff’s down there. Everybody is down there for the same reason: to earn a living.” He said, “Just keep your head down and your rear end in the air,” he said, “and you’ll do alright.” And for the most part, it was true. I think the kids that came in with us maybe were the hardest on us. I think, you know, the peers. Maybe they’d heard their dads talking, I don’t know. But there was some, you know, I met with some—some Me Too stuff.

[00:29:33] **HARVEY:** Really? Can you describe that a little bit? It’s part of the record. Do you care to elaborate at all?

[00:29:40] **SHARON:** Well, when I worked out at—I talked about different things, I tell you, I worked on—The worst thing I remember, I hate to even talk about this one, it’s bringing tears to my eyes, because most of the men were so nice. I hadn’t been there very long, and I was working an auto-ship at [terminal six], a Honda, and a guy got on, a guy about my age, longshore, been a longshoreman, come from a longshore family. But he was drinking, he’d been to Las Vegas, I think, or Reno or some place. And so I was in the back of this bus, and he started telling somebody about his adventures in Las Vegas, and how they had a two-for-one and this, and I was just on the—I was the only woman on the job, period. I mean, it hurt my feelings. It hurt my feelings a lot, you know, to think that someone would purposefully talk that way in front of me. I shouldn’t talk about it. See, it upsets me still, I didn’t realize. I hadn’t thought about that for a long time. Anyway, a couple of—I tried to hide my tears. I got off the ship and it was just a couple older men that had been longshoremen and said, “I’m sorry,” you know, apologized to me for him, said, “I’m sorry that it happened,” blah, blah, blah. But for the most part, [wiping eyes] I think I maybe wrote in my little story about—the other—I went to work, I was working at terminal four at the truck shack shop there, and of course it was a steady job, you know, for some people working there steady. I had this little shack there where you weighed the grain, just room enough for a desk and the truck driver to step in with you. But the ceiling—they had put over the years “girly pictures” up on the ceiling, so there was all this, so I just tried to ignore them. But, you know, then when the truck drivers come in and stuff, and I thought, nah, you know, I’m not gonna handle this. And so what I did—it was a Sunday and the Sunday paper was there and I’d eaten lunch, and I thought ha! So what I did is I cut paper doll clothes and put them on all the girls on the ceiling, on all the pinups. [laughing] They thought it was funny, they accepted it, you know, and I was pretty well liked there anyway. I did the best I could, you know, I tried to work hard. But then there was another millwright shop, the millwright shop at terminal five, a cook elevator. They had some big “girly pictures” in the boss’ office, and all the gear was in there—not the gear, but the earplugs and safety glasses and that—so for the day, you had to go in to the—the dust masks—you had to go in the millwright’s office to get the, the millwright’s office to get these. So I suggested to the boss, the longshore boss there, that maybe they just move those out in the other room and then the women wouldn’t have to go in there. They could have their pictures, and we wouldn’t have to go in there. ‘Cause it’s uncomfortable! And I come into work the next morning, and I was secretly pleased that this other gal, she was a white card then, full blown feminist, boy, and this boss had said something to her about it before I got there, and she just told him just what he thought. [laughing] Called him a big baby and blah, blah, blah. Yeah, she took the brunt of that one. But, you know, other than that. I don’t know. Those [?innuendos?] —I don’t think they’ll ever leave the waterfront or anyplace—any place where men and women are working, no. I think—I don’t know.

[00:34:20] **HARVEY:** We kinda missed one story that I think is pretty important. The dispatcher was Glen Bunker?

[00:34:27] **SHARON:** [nodding] Glen Bunker was a dispatcher.

[00:34:29] **HARVEY:** And he was the one who said you were the first woman on the waterfront? How did that happen?

[00:34:34] **SHARON:** Well, when he called my number, you know, they were calling numbers for the autos. And he just called my number and then he said, “81665, the first woman to work on the Portland docks.” I was embarrassed because I was the only woman there that knew I was the first hire, and I was the only woman in the hall to start with. But I was secretly pleased as well, of course. To hear that, yeah.

[00:35:04] **HARVEY:** You felt on the spot a little bit?

[00:35:06] **SHARON:** Yeah, a little bit. But my brother came into the hall that night, and he was working, so I knew he was well liked, and he introduced me to a couple guys. So that kinda put the—took some of the tension off. And then with the autos, that was—

[00:35:26] **HARVEY:** You wrote a little bit about the old drop box dispatching system, which was also known as the Chinese laundry.

[00:35:33] **SHARON:** [nodding] Chinese lottery.

[00:35:34] **HARVEY:** Lottery, I’m sorry. Chinese lottery. But what was that old system like, and how’d it—how did you find that, and how did you deal with it?

[00:35:41] **SHARON:** Well, they had boxes for the A men. They had a box for the A men, a wooden box that has a slot in it; a box for the permits, the B men, which I was. We come in the union, luckily, never had to do the white card. You’d either tie your plug to a—you had a plug, a number—and there was a board that the plugs went in. And you could either tie your plug up with another person to work partners or you could tie it with a blank to work by yourself. And so you go in, and you put your plug in a box and the dispatcher would shake that box up [mimes shaking box vigorously] and start putting the numbers in. The pads were already laid out in the window. So when you called your number, you’d go in and it was a fair shake. They do it a little differently now, I guess.

[00:36:45] **HARVEY:** Did we establish this is Local 8 in Portland already? I mean, I know that’s obvious to us, but it might not be to someone listening to that in thirty years.

[00:36:53] **SHARON:** Local 8.

[00:36:54] **HARVEY:** Local 8, right. When did this system change? When did this system of dispatching change?

[00:37:00] **SHARON:** I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know. But I know it’s changed now—they have a master plug that—

[00:37:07] **HARVEY:** Yeah, it’s different.

[00:37:08] **SHARON:** Yeah, it’s different.

[00:37:09] **RON:** Did you travel to Vancouver or Longview?

[00:37:12] **SHARON:** I traveled to Long—to Vancouver, but I never traveled other than that, no.

[00:37:19] **RON:** What did you do at Vancouver?

[00:37:21] **SHARON:** Autos. Autos.

[00:37:23] **RON:** Autos?

[00:37:24] **SHARON:** Yeah.

[00:37:25] **RON:** And when was that?

[00:37:27] **SHARON:** That was in the—had to be in the early 80s.

[00:37:30] **RON:** Early '80s. Did they have women? Longshore women back then?

[00:37:36] **SHARON:** Yes, they did. They come in about the same time I think as we did. They had I think two gals there, I met the two gals.

[00:37:43] **RON:** Did you like Vancouver? Or it was just a place?

[00:37:49] **SHARON:** It was just a place, I mean, no. I live in St. Johns, I live right across the river from Vancouver.

[00:37:55] **RON:** The friendly—the degree of friendliness, or since you were just traveling, it wasn't much contact?

[00:38:07] **SHARON:** Well, it was friendly, we were friends, especially with the gals, you know, the gals because—yeah, everybody worked together. Longshoremen are really—

[00:38:19] **RON:** And you were there when the mountain blew? Mt. St. Helens? And business went slack?

[00:38:26] **SHARON:** I was. Oh boy, it sure did.

[00:38:28] **RON:** What'd you do?

[00:38:30] **SHARON:** Well, I did a lot of [unintelligible] permits. We did a lot of sweeping ash off the docks, washing the docks. You know, work just dropped to nothing, so we just scrambled. Just scrambled.

[00:38:43] **RON:** Did you go to California?

[00:38:49] **SHARON:** No, no, no, no, no. I never went to—no, no, no, no. Some of my girlfriends did. One of the gals there, one of the first gals, she did some traveling. She went to Coos Bay, I think she was the first woman to work in Coos Bay. [?Peggy Mare?] , she later became a boss, Local 92.

[00:39:07] **RON:** Did you know Jesse Stranahan?

[00:39:08] **SHARON:** Stranahan? No, I didn't know Jesse, but I knew his wife because she was still—Lois—she was still alive and coming to the union meetings.

[00:39:20] **RON:** Is she still alive?

[00:39:21] **SHARON:** She's—no, she's not. She just passed last year, I think. She passed—she was back east.

[00:39:28] **RON:** Did she win or lose her case?

[00:39:30] **SHARON:** I don't know. I don't know. But my folks—of course, my dad—just talked so much about them; they were so active. I just met a woman in this little writing class I do that was an activist with them and knew the Stranahans, and she talked about one of their tactics. They would put an ironing board up, an ironing board up at these places where they were picketing, and—information, and then have their information laid out on the ironing board, and of course everybody wanted to know what you got an ironing board out there for, yeah. Which I found—yeah, I'd never heard of that before.

[00:40:14] **RON:** [Jesse Stranahan's] knowledge of important local [unintelligible] was encyclopedic—tremendous knowledge of all the pieces that fit together, how the [unintelligible] companies along the longshore, officers, all of that for years.

[00:40:36] **SHARON:** He was [points to head]

[00:40:37] **RON:** Yeah, he was very bright, very quick.

[00:40:40] **SHARON:** His and my dad's—yeah, my dad remarked on that so many times.

[00:40:46] **RON:** A socialist.

[00:40:47] **SHARON:** Yeah.

[00:40:47] **RON:** Did you run in to many of the different—well, by the 80s, it was pretty much over, the radical movement that went through the Portland local, from the Wobblies [Industrial Workers of the World] to the [one bay union ?] to the Ku Klux Klan—did anybody in your family ever talk about any of those?

[00:41:13] **SHARON:** Never talked much about the Ku Klux Klan—

[00:41:16] **RON:** Never. They were dominated by movements that were trying to get them out of the [?think hole?] and into a union. Most of all, did you ever know a man named Conrad Negstad?

[00:41:34] **SHARON:** No. Who?

[00:41:37] **RON:** He was the vice president of the ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] coastwise for quite a few years and from Portland, probably in the area.

[00:41:51] **SHARON:** There's some good and bad history here. I remember—

[00:41:57] **RON:** I think it's because of race relations.

[00:42:02] **SHARON:** I remember my dad talked about Harry's [unintelligible] and his--I can't remember--his [gestures hand] first to the union meeting, to say that they were gonna take in Blacks--what was the guy's name he sent?

[00:42:19] **HARVEY:** Do you mean the first Black guy?

[00:42:21] **SHARON:** No, who Harry Bridges sent to appear to the union meeting, I think maybe it was the vice president or something. He sent him here first. You remember, you know that?

[00:42:30] **HARVEY:** Who was it?

[00:42:31] **RON:** Rosco?

[00:42:32] **CONOR:** I can look it up, it's in a thesis.

[00:42:35] **HARVEY:** It wouldn't have been Bill Chester?

[00:42:36] **RON:** No, it was Rosco Craycraft.

[00:42:41] **HARVEY:** Craycraft, Rosco Craycraft.

[00:42:41] **SHARON:** But anyway, how they booed him and then later booed Harry Bridges, my dad always [shakes head] my dad always thought that was awful, terrible. My dad didn't think that Blacks got a fair shake.

[00:42:56] **HARVEY:** He thought that they did not get a--

[00:42:57] **SHARON:** He did not, they did not, he did not. He talked about one longshoreman--I shouldn't even say this in front of this camera!

[00:43:04] **HARVEY:** No, that's ok.

[00:43:04] **SHARON:** He talked about one longshoreman down there who told one of the Blacks--I'll never forget this either, because my dad the way he told it, he said this guy told this Black guy to his face, he said, "What are you gonna do?" He said, "We take you out of the trees, take you down out of the trees, bring you over here from Africa, put some shoes on you, now you're gonna act like this?" To talk like that to another man, to another person, that's...yeah.

[00:43:44] **HARVEY:** Did you experience or observe anything that was tension between Black workers and white workers after you came on the waterfront?

[00:43:54] **SHARON:** Some, yeah.

[00:43:56] **HARVEY:** Do you recall a story about that?

[00:43:58] **SHARON:** Well, I know that yeah, there was some disagreement, I think they even have their own [?picnics?] now, somebody told me, they do their own [?picnics?] now. So I don't know what it all was about, there was just about as it always is in Black and white situations. I don't know. One of the first women was [?Eddie May Lincoln?] , you know, the first five women here, [?Eddie May Lincoln?] . I don't think the men liked her very much, they didn't think that she worked hard enough, or worked fast enough or something. She was a capable woman, big, strong, I liked her, and she maybe didn't move real fast, but [shrugs] she did the job.

[00:45:00] **HARVEY:** You know what we didn't get was your first day on the job, your first job, your first day on the job.

[00:45:04] **SHARON:** First night.

[00:45:06] **HARVEY:** Excuse me.

[00:45:06] **SHARON:** Yeah, first night. I worked a freightliner on a Friday night, and went to the hall on a Saturday night and got a job at Honda, Terminal Six. It was in April, and I remember it was cold and chilly out, chilly in the evening, and I wore a sweatshirt. And it was a whole auto ship, and they gave us a hammer and a flashlight, and it was the old autos that were lashed down with the forward lashes. And so we were, God, we're

down in the bottom of the ship, and I remember in the dank and awful and the longshoremen at the time started driving, once so many got unlocked, got unlatched they would start driving off, now which they don't do, they unlatch the entire ship. So all that carbon, all that went to the [gestures hand] and I remember being down there, oh my God, working and sweating and coming out in my sweatshirt just sweating, and one of the longshoremen there had an extra shirt and gave me a shirt, so that was decent. So that was my first night, and it was good, they were good. [nods]

[00:46:27] **HARVEY:** Right.

[00:46:27] **SHARON:** Yeah. Then I went to the China ship, and that was my next job.

[00:46:32] **HARVEY:** Was that the one that lasted a while?

[00:46:36] **SHARON:** Yes it did, it was breakbulk, all breakbulk. I think it was the third Chinese ship here.

[00:46:43] **HARVEY:** What was the product you were working?

[00:46:44] **SHARON:** Oh my God, everything. There was bales of cotton, there was boxes of clothes, and at the bottom I think there was barrels or some kind of ceramic barrels, I think maybe with kimchi or something in it.

[00:47:10] **HARVEY:** How'd you work, did you use a hook?

[00:47:13] **SHARON:** No, I didn't use a hook. I never saw anybody use a hook. I've never seen anybody use a hook. [shrugs] No, no. [shakes head]

[00:47:22] **RON:** No packing wheat?

[00:47:23] **SHARON:** Pardon me?

[00:47:24] **RON:** You didn't pack wheat or flour?

[00:47:26] **SHARON:** I packed flour, yeah.

[00:47:28] **RON:** How much, the weight of the sack?

[00:47:30] **SHARON:** I packed fifty pounds, fifty pounds was more than I could almost do. Fifty pounds. And you got to choose your jobs, and did I ever choose that job again, Crown Flour? No. no. [laughs] In fact, my partner, I worked with Peggy [?Maire?], and we'd take turns. I'd choose the job one time, she'd choose the job next time, and I think she paid me back because I took a job at Matson, I signed us up for a job at Matson, and they were the old turnbuckles. [laughs] And they were all on the after end of the ship, and we were working the forward end of the ship, it was summertime and we had to haul those turnbuckles. I think that job lasted a week. We had to haul all those turnbuckles you know, [groans] oh my God, I remember that. There was some hard work. I couldn't throw 100 pound sacks all day, no way!

[00:48:28] **RON:** Did you ever fire yourself from a job?

[00:48:32] **SHARON:** No.

[00:48:34] **RON:** Did you ever get hurt?

[00:48:35] **SHARON:** No. No, I got hurt in the eye one time, and I got a black eye one time, I got plunked with a piece of dunnage or something, but no.

[00:48:49] **RON:** Did you ever have any grievance against PMA or any of that world?

[00:48:54] **SHARON:** No.

[00:48:56] **RON:** No runs? No hits? No errors?

[00:48:58] **SHARON:** [laughs] No, just rolled right along. I ended up on the grain elevator after I got my A plugged in. I lived five minutes from Terminal Four, I still do. It was just, it was easy. I mean, it was nice to--I miss the [sights] you know, it's so nice to work on the water and experience the different jobs, and I never thought I'd experience any of that that my dad described. But you know, I did see some of that, like I had the working downtown and I was working--I think I was slinging on the dock. And this Johnny Olson checker, he knew the first mate, the first mate brought him back all this nice materials. And this Johnny Olson would make him this--anyway, would bring back this nice stuff. He knew the first mate, so he introduced me to the first mate who had an orangutan. And so he brought that little orangutan up on deck, and that little guy, aw gosh, I held that little guy, he was so cute, he was just so cute, just cuddled, he was just a baby. And the guy, he said that his mother had gotten run over by a log truck or something, that scrap pulp lumber is what it was. But anyways, I remember we had to take him back down and put him back down in his cabin, and he just fit like a little kid. Then I read in the paper that there was Customs at the end of the dock at Terminal One and they had seen him and so they confiscated him and put him in the zoo, that little guy.

[00:51:03] **RON:** Did you ever run for office?

[00:51:07] **SHARON:** No, no, no. I'm just--I'm not fast on my feet [laughs] as you can probably tell by this interview. No, I'm not a speaker, I'm not a--no.

[00:51:24] **RON:** But you did know Jimmy Herman?

[00:51:27] **SHARON:** Well, I met Jimmy Herman at the picnic, yeah.

[00:51:35] **HARVEY:** Do you remember the old hall?

[00:51:36] **SHARON:** Oh, I loved the old hall.

[00:51:38] **HARVEY:** Yeah, what was that like? I mean, that's kind of like in the big dust of history now. Can you describe the old hall?

[00:51:42] **SHARON:** Yeah, at Seventeenth [Avenue] and Glisan [Street] . Yeah, the old church, it was just a different atmosphere, it had a balcony upstairs. I always think of that balcony because I remember my dad singing in the early years and my brother, they had one dispatcher down there that if the white cars--he'd throw plugs up in the balcony [laughs] when he'd get angry, he'd go up and throw them out of the window. But it was just old, polished wood and everything was wooden in there. It was just a nice, snug atmosphere, just full of shoulder-to-shoulder to men, just a nice atmosphere and everybody talking to everybody, everybody wearing clothes, figuring out what they're gonna do for the day. [shrugs]

[00:52:39] **HARVEY:** What about across the street, you had French's Bar and Grill?

[00:52:42] **SHARON:** Yep.

[00:52:42] **HARVEY:** What was that like?

[00:52:44] **SHARON:** I never went to French's, I mean, I never hung out in French's, but I knew a lot of men did. A lot of them would cash their checks there, a lot of them would have a drink in the morning before they go to the job, you know, a lot of guys, there were a lot of drinkers on the waterfront.

[00:52:58] **HARVEY:** Were there dancing girls there?

[00:52:59] **SHARON:** No, no, no.

[00:53:00] **HARVEY:** You didn't have go-go girls or anything?

[00:53:02] **SHARON:** No, I don't think so, no.

[00:53:03] **HARVEY:** Oh you didn't know?

[00:53:04] **SHARON:** No, they didn't have go-go girls at French's, I don't think.

[00:53:08] **HARVEY:** I thought that was in your memoir.

[00:53:10] **SHARON:** No. [shakes head]

[00:53:11] **HARVEY:** Ok, maybe that's--ok. How come you didn't go there?

[00:53:15] **SHARON:** Well, I had no reason to. I mean, [shrugs] I'd go to the hall for a job, if I didn't get out we did go to another little place, I can't remember, once in awhile, and have a drink in the morning, have a Bloody Mary on a Sunday morning or something, have breakfast [?Yore's?] --what's the name of the place? [?Yore's?] I think. But French's, no.

[00:53:39] **RON:** Did you know Francis Murnane?

[00:53:42] **SHARON:** No, I didn't know Francis Murnane. No.

[00:53:46] **RON:** Ever go into the Stark Street Buffet?

[00:53:49] **SHARON:** No. You know, that was--I didn't come down until 1980.

[00:53:57] **RON:** I know, I'm trying to get you earlier.

[00:53:59] **SHARON:** Yeah. '80, you know, that's... [nods]

[00:54:09] **RON:** I was quite familiar with the hall from about 1950-1970, my mother was a waitress at the Stark Street Buffet, and it was near the hall.

[00:54:24] **SHARON:** Was it?

[00:54:27] **RON:** And so I knew quite a few of the longshoremen who came and left there, and Portland longshoremen were quite distinct from the regular Seattle or San Francisco longshoremen.

[00:54:48] **SHARON:** Really? How's that?

[00:54:51] **RON:** They were very--they created--they had creative ideas, if you look at the Portland longshore, it created what became the settlement of the '34 strike, the ideas that were adopted by the National Longshore Board that solved the strike, those were ideas that came from Portland. They were the creative force in 1909 to found the Coastwise Longshore Association.

[00:55:33] **SHARON:** I didn't know that. That's something to be proud of.

[00:55:33] **RON:** There was a group of creative nature here that was not in San Francisco until Harry probably got there, or in Seattle or Los Angeles or other places, but there is a creative streak in the history of Portland. And I can still see parts of it today. But Francis Murnane is the name--the coastwise people waited for him to make decisions, considered probably the--later after '34, the man in waiting to take over if Harry Bridges got deported. [laughs] They wanted to put a statue up of him here.

[00:56:44] **SHARON:** Of Francis Murnane?

[00:56:45] **RON:** In Francis Murnane's name.

[00:56:47] **SHARON:** What about the dock? Wasn't that Francis Murnane Dock that they tore down that they're--that they haven't replaced?

[00:56:59] **HARVEY:** You know, that's right.

[00:57:00] **SHARON:** Yeah, yeah, because--yeah. I have an article about that, I saved an article about that, Francis Murnane and what an activist he was and how they had the memorial downtown and then they took it downtown. And it seems like--The person from the Heritage, St. John's Heritage, his father was a longshoreman who's active in history. He has tried to pursue that Francis Murnane thing, and he said it's because of racial reasons, maybe? Francis Murnane--

[00:57:45] **RON:** Yeah, he was--he said nothing while he was president of the local about taking African Americans in. But he had been in the union when there were Black longshoremen in Portland who were in the ILA. The last Blacks were turned away from the waterfront in Portland in 1922. They went as a body to Tacoma.

[00:58:17] **SHARON:** Oh really? And worked there as longshoremen?

[00:58:20] **RON:** And worked there, yup.

[00:58:22] **SHARON:** And they couldn't work here.

[00:58:23] **RON:** I have the records. And I presented them one time at a meeting here and they shouted me down, maybe ten years ago.

[00:58:35] **SHARON:** Every once in a while, like when I first came in the union, I was disappointed when it was brought up a couple different times about Portland being a radical union. And I knew what they were talking about at the time, I knew that they were talking about because the racial thing. And they--everybody clapped.

[00:59:01] **RON:** The Southerners controlled county politics like Multnomah, that kind of thing, and my family are from Portland. We go back to 1850, so a long history of recognizing it, and I don't understand why you wipe out all the history here.

[00:59:28] **SHARON:** No, you gotta know the good and the bad.

[00:59:31] **RON:** The good and the bad. But just Stranahan was aware of all that, there were a lot of people in the Portland longshore union who are aware of the long history, they don't want to raise it as an issue anymore.

[00:59:56] **SHARON:** Well just like I hesitated around talking about that, it's so touchy.

[01:00:02] **RON:** But if you take the good with the bad, as I said, they were very creative, and especially in negotiating with the employers. They had a skill, like Conrad Negstad, for example. If I had another lifetime to live, I would give it a shot to write the Portland history.

[01:00:30] **SHARON:** Gosh, yeah. Even get it down orally.

[01:00:33] **RON:** Yeah.

[01:00:36] **HARVEY:** You know, there's one thing that you mentioned in your memoir, about the employer encouraging drinking. I never heard that directly, about the employer doing that. Can you describe that? That's a unique sort of insight that you had here.

[01:00:53] **SHARON:** Well, this is information that I have from my dad and I guess longshoremen about the early days of the waterfront. You know, they encouraged the guys to stay down there, because they'd stay down there until the job was finished. And maybe the job was almost finished, maybe it had only a day's more work, and how they'd supply them with alcohol, they'd send down alcohol .

[01:01:20] **HARVEY:** They actually supplied them with alcohol?

[01:01:20] **SHARON:** [nods] Send down alcohol on the board so they would stay and work.

[01:01:28] **HARVEY:** It's remarkable, I'd never heard of that before.

[01:01:31] **SHARON:** Have you heard that before, Ron?

[01:01:33] **RON:** No, I had not.

[01:01:38] **SHARON:** Whether this was before the unions, I don't think so. I think it must've been after. Well, no, it had to be before the unions, because it was--yeah, it had to be before the unions, but yeah.

[01:01:49] **HARVEY:** Was that like in your grandfather's era?

[01:01:56] **SHARON:** Yeah.

[01:01:58] **RON:** There was always a union here, even in the fink hall years, and there were two or three dozen who stayed together through all of that, and they had to keep it secret. They would've been discriminated against. I think-- but Portland has a consistent history since 1878.

[01:02:29] **SHARON:** The different odd things I remember is I remember my dad talking about the communists, when they were wanting to deport everybody, and people pointing fingers at each other. And he said there was one longshoreman that he said was an unknown socialist--I mean, I figure [laughs] I'm a socialist, my dad was a socialist, you know?--but anyways, they had little cookies, and I can't remember the kind, either vanilla or chocolate, and they come with a little red piece of cardboard. Well, they would put the

pieces of cardboard in this guy's lunchbox. Just the different mean things that they did, I remember my dad... [shakes head]

[01:03:26] **RON:** I heard that.

[01:03:27] **SHARON:** Have you heard that?

[01:03:28] **RON:** Yes.

[01:03:28] **SHARON:** Yeah, that was... [shakes head]

[01:03:32] **RON:** They used to put messages in the lunchboxes, and there's several accounts of what they talked about at lunch that mention the coming and going of these movements like the Wobblies and the Ku Klux Klan, and I would've thought that it was impossible to be a member of the Ku Klux Klan and the Wobblies.

[01:04:05] **SHARON:** At the same time?

[01:04:07] **RON:** At the same time.

[01:04:07] **SHARON:** Really? That sounds so foreign.

[01:04:12] **RON:** Nope, and that actually happened.

[01:04:14] **HARVEY:** In Portland?

[01:04:15] **RON:** 1922.

[01:04:21] **SHARON:** 'Cause I certainly respect the Wobblies [laughs and coughs]

[01:04:25] **RON:** Well, Portland has always had a good chunk of its population as radicals, right from the very beginning. I happened to be here when a Russian ship came in, with the red star and everything, it was hilarious. There was a huge welcoming party for it.

I'm really interested in knowing what you think of the future of the Portland waterfront, given circumstances that are happening now.

[01:05:07] **SHARON:** [shakes head] I don't think they have a chance. I think sooner or later they're gonna--I mean, not just the Portland waterfront, but I think waterfronts as a whole--I mean, what's this president gonna do? What are they gonna--you know, they're gonna whittle away for one, they're gonna take our health insurance, I'm sure. That's gonna be a big one. No, it's not gonna be as good as it was, I don't think, no. And the work is so slack now, too, there isn't much work in Portland now. They lost Terminal Six to containers. There's a lot of controversy about that action, too, what was done right and what was done wrong.

[01:06:00] **HARVEY:** Did we ask you what was the worst product you ever worked?

[01:06:03] **SHARON:** The worst product?

[01:06:04] **HARVEY:** Yeah, that you ever worked.

[01:06:05] **SHARON:** [sighs]

[01:06:08] **RON:** [laughs] Are there too many?

[01:06:12] **SHARON:** Well, I'll tell you, I did do the container freight station, there used to be a container freight station down at Terminal Six, down at [points backwards] Rivergate. There was a container freight station, and I offloaded the railroad cars of hides. There wasn't loading them in the ship, trying to get them to--It was just taking them out, putting them on the docks, and someone picking them up with a forklift. I wasn't trying to stack them in the hold of the ship. Couldn't have picked one up, that's why. And you know, I've done a lot of nasty wheat, shoveled a lot of wheat. And that flour job, the Crown Flour job, that was not good, that was just hard. I think that a job that you go that you think that you can't, like the big hook, like when you have to change the big hook. "Put the hook on!" That kind of job, I feel helpless when that comes up, and I feel so inadequate. Like on the waterfront I tried to--and I know that you can't always do what the next guy does, you don't have the strength--but I tried to do my share, if nothing else I'd pick up something or sweep something, just try to be--but it's not an equal deal, you know it can't be, because we're not built the same, women. You can do a machine, you can do this, but there's some jobs... [shakes head]

[01:08:03] **HARVEY:** Well when you were removing hides, how did you manage that? Did you use your hands?

[01:08:08] **SHARON:** We were using everything I think, yeah.

[01:08:11] **HARVEY:** Did you have gloves?

[01:08:12] **SHARON:** Oh sure, you know.

[01:08:13] **HARVEY:** Ok, you didn't have hooks?

[01:08:14] **SHARON:** No, we might've had some kind of hook, we might've had some kind.

[01:08:17] **HARVEY:** This big round hook thing?

[01:08:17] **SHARON:** We might've had, yeah.

[01:08:20] **HARVEY:** You guys had one in each hand, kind of these rounded things or something like that?

[01:08:23] **SHARON:** Exactly, yeah.

[01:08:25] **RON:** Shaking the salt out.

[01:08:31] **SHARON:** [groans] No, no.

[01:08:31] **HARVEY:** Any favorite cargo that you moved doing breakbulk?

[01:08:37] **SHARON:** Doing the breakbulk? Breakbulk was fun, and it was hard work, but it was fun. That was at the container station there. But the breakbulk in the Chinese ships, there were a couple of Chinese ships, that was fun because you're working with other people and it's competitive, and you're trying to get your board and trying to keep everything going. So the competition, that was a fun part of it. And it was hard work, but yeah.

[01:09:12] **RON:** Would you have done it all over again?

[01:09:15] **SHARON:** Oh certainly, certainly. If nothing else, for the health insurance. It was a good job, and if you're sick, or like my parents, at the end of my retirement my parents were ill, so I took time off. And to be

able to call in and not have them question or make you go to the doctor or something, the freedom, that's everything. And I only had twenty years, I only got twenty years in, so I didn't have the good pensions as some of the guys, but I got a decent pension for twenty years and the best health insurance. I mean, I'm eighty-one, I don't know what I'd do if--and I see my friends and family who hesitated to go to the doctor because of the bills.

[01:10:06] **RON:** Because of the costs.

[01:10:07] **SHARON:** Yeah, because they can't afford it. So I feel so fortunate to be in this industry. And I knew, too, I knew, I was waiting for it.

[01:10:20] **RON:** Did you ever speak at the stop work meeting?

[01:10:23] **SHARON:** No.

[01:10:24] **RON:** Oh, I would've hoped you would.

[01:10:26] **SHARON:** No, no. I shouldn't be speaking here today, you can hear me. [laughs]

[01:10:33] **RON:** No, I think you're great.

[01:10:34] **HARVEY:** I appreciate it a great deal.

What about your kids, your two daughters, what are they going on to do?

[01:10:45] **SHARON:** My youngest daughter is handicapped and lives with me, she's had her problems. The oldest daughter--they were both married and divorced--the oldest daughter is a cook at Central Catholic [High School], no union, terrible healthcare. I think she's been there for twelve years, no healthcare, works hard.

[01:11:17] **HARVEY:** You had a grandson?

[01:11:20] **SHARON:** I have a grandson on the waterfront.

[01:11:24] **RON:** On your part, do you come in on your part or legacy?

[01:11:30] **SHARON:** No he came in when you first had to go through the employment agency .

[01:11:37] **RON:** So he took that route.

[01:11:40] **SHARON:** Yeah, so he was lucky he got picked, really. I'm sure it had something to do with nepotism, because he was only eighteen, he didn't have a driver's license yet, I had to take him down and get a driver's license. He was living with me, and I had to go down and get him a driver's license because I didn't want it on my insurance. [laughs] So now he's thirty-something, yeah.

[01:12:10] **HARVEY:** Do you go to Pensioners meetings?

[01:12:12] **SHARON:** Oh yeah.

[01:12:13] **RON:** Do you like them?

[01:12:15] **SHARON:** Mhm, sure, I keep up with what's going on. When I retired, the first six years I didn't go because I took care--my mother had a stroke, I retired in September of '99. I retired early, really, because my

dad had an aneurysm of the heart and he was ailing, and he'd lived through it, and anyway, I was taking care of my parents. So, when I retired, my mother had a stroke just a couple years later, and she was paralyzed, and so I took care of her. She was in a hospital bed at home, so I was pretty much there everyday for the next six years. So I missed all the pensioners and meetings and everything then, but after my mom passed, I always go.

[01:13:17] **HARVEY:** Do you ever go to the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association conventions?

[01:13:20] **SHARON:** No, I never went.

[01:13:22] **HARVEY:** How come you choose not to go to those?

[01:13:23] **SHARON:** [sighs] I don't know, because I'm backwards, I think. [laughs] And I went in the elevator, and I really don't have many friends left on the water, I mean, I don't have a lot of friends on the waterfront. I'm kind of a solitary person. [shrugs] I'm not very social.

[01:13:47] **HARVEY:** But you go to the Pensioners every--

[01:13:48] **SHARON:** I go to the Pensioners.

[01:13:50] **HARVEY:** That's good.

[01:13:51] **SHARON:** I go to the Pensioners, yeah. But no, I've never run for office or I've never--no, no. And you see, I'm not going to the--where are they going today? Casino?

[01:14:08] **HARVEY:** They're going to wines and casinos.

[01:14:09] **SHARON:** Oh, wine, yeah, yeah.

[01:14:13] **RON:** Did the majority go as they always do every year to the casino, or did a few go to the winery?

[01:14:21] **SHARON:** I don't know who was going where.